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Summary

Calypso music is one of the oldest and most recognizable genres to emanate from the Anglophone Caribbean. With global anthems such as ‘Feeling hot hot hot’ and popular folk classics such as the Banana Boat Song - ‘Day-O’, calypso music is recognized globally as the ultimate Caribbean party music. However, within the Caribbean basin, veiled behind the curtain of its creole languages, it is especially known for its critique of the dominant classes and the articulation of a plethora of emotions through rhyming of words on a syncopated beat.

Calypso music was birth on Caribbean plantations during slavery as a response to repression during the colonial era. African slaves on the now island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, created a system of communication where they lamented through song in *double entendre*. Today, calypso music is commonly referred to as ‘the voice of the people’.

Using an array of anthropological tools and multilingual reflexive approaches in my writing, in this dissertation, I take the reader on an ethnographic journey into the world of calypso music on the plurilingual Dutch Caribbean island of Aruba. Calypso music has made its way to Aruba by means of inter-Caribbean work migration at the onset of the 20th century. What started as ‘immigrant music’, has now become a significant part of Aruba’s intangible cultural heritage for many persons on the island. Yet for the vast academic research carried out on calypso music in Caribbean cultural anthropology, ethnomusicology, literature and history, remarkably little scholarly production has emanated from the Dutch Caribbean.

In general, this dissertation aims to contribute to this gaping void. I do so by engaging with notions and fields such as branding and identity in the Caribbean (The One Happy Island Narrative), Caribbean world making, music and dance, history and migration, plurilingualism, lyrics and creolization among others.

My main argument is premised on the idea that for all of calypso's power to engage with the dominant discourses, as the majority of the existing literature suggests, Critical-Calypso, the slower version of calypso music, has its limitations. I argue that the very much enjoyed, yet much frowned upon, Roadmarch-Calypso, (the more up-tempo party version more popularly known as Soca), deserves deeper scholarly attention. I argue that Roadmarch-Calypso contrary to popular belief, is also able to engage the political in alternative and perhaps even more profound ways despite being seen as frivolous.

To accomplish this, I found theoretical assistance in the thinking of Roland Barthes' notions of *plaisir* [pleasurable enjoyment] and *jouissance* [blissful enjoyment]. It has provided me with a vocabulary to further accentuate the experiences underlying these two varieties of calypso and how they engage with dominant discourses in Aruban society.

Some of the major takeaways of this study can be summarized along these lines.

Despite the limitations of creolization theories, the creole approach to Caribbean world making allows a space for deeper understanding of a musical genre that has traditionally been seen as simply 'Trinidadian', 'English Caribbean', 'the voice of the people' and as solely of 'African extraction'.

What my ethnography also shows is that we should not place too much emphasis on fixed conceptual labels when engaging in our anthropology as researchers. There is an eminent danger in reducing our interlocutors' stories to a single narrative or dual narratives for that matter. The research also shows, that which we wish to shed light on is dynamic and ever-changing. We see that for example Arubans continuously show much agency in how they engage with calypso music. They demonstrate this by looking for new ways to subvert the constraints of oppressive power laden constructs and even politics by means of dance and expression.

Lastly, this dissertation shows that Roadmarch-Calypso music and Critical-Calypso should not be seen as opposing entities. Rather, they should be seen as part of a continuous process whereby the *plaisir* of the cerebral Critical-Calypso lays the groundwork for the possible *jouissance* of the Roadmarch-Calypso.